ANNA
LAPWOOD
FIREDOVE

Well here we are! Another solo organ album, and this one feels like it pulls together all my experiences from the last couple of years; the highs, the lows, and the sheer intensity of emotion that only music can bring. I recorded this album in overnight recording sessions at Nidaros Cathedral after a busy period of touring. Every concert from that touring period fed into what this album has become, allowing me to experiment with the repertoire and programming, and hone what I wanted to say with the help of audiences from all across the world. It's an explosion of emotion, bringing together all the different strands of my musical world, from organ to choral, and from classical to pop, all seen through the lens of this remarkable instrument. For me, recording this felt like a spreading of musical wings, and so I hope that whoever you are and whatever you're going through at the moment, it might encourage you to spread your wings too.

Anna Lapwood

1. **THE BELLS OF NIDAROS CATHEDRAL**

2. **THE BELLS OF NOTRE DAME**
   FROM *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME*
   COMPOSER: ALAN MENKEN

3. **TIME** FROM *INCEPTION*
   COMPOSER: HANS ZIMMER

4. **FLIGHT - INTRODUCTION**
   SAXOPHONE: JESS GILLAM

5. **FLIGHT**
   COMPOSER: RACHEL PORTMAN
   SAXOPHONE: JESS GILLAM

6. **LIMINA LUMINIS**
   COMPOSER: OLIVIA BELLI

7. **FIREDOVE**
   COMPOSER: JULIE COOPER
   THE CHAPEL CHOIR OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
   VIOLIN: ELENA URIOSTE

8. **COME TO ME**
   COMPOSER: IVO ANTOGNINI
   LYRICIST: CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI
   THE CHAPEL CHOIR OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

9. **MAKE YOU FEEL MY LOVE**
   COMPOSER: BOB DYLAN
   THE CHAPEL CHOIR OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
   ORGAN: MOLLY HORD
   SOLOIST: MARYAM GIRAUD

10. **ANGELS**
    COMPOSERS: ROBBIE WILLIAMS & GUY CHAMBERS

11. **NORTHERN LIGHTS**
    COMPOSER: OLA GJEILO

12. **MURMURATIONS**
    COMPOSER: POPPY ACKROYD

13. **NAÏADES**
    COMPOSER: LOUIS VIERNE

14. **GLASS**
    COMPOSER: HANIA RANI

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE SUR LE NOM D'ALAIN OP. 7

15. **I. PRÉLUDE**
    COMPOSER: MAURICE DURUFLÉ

16. **II. FUGUE**
    COMPOSER: MAURICE DURUFLÉ

1+2 THE BELLS OF NOTRE DAME

The album begins with the bells of Nidaros Cathedral. We leave the noise of the market square behind us, entering the sanctuary of the Cathedral, before launching into 'The Bells of Notre Dame'. This is the soundtrack which opens Disney's 1996 film 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame' which wins my prize for best opening of an animated film! I've always thought one of the things which makes it so special is the interaction between music and on-screen drama. The opening sequence is accompanied by this incredible piece of musical storytelling, painting the sound world of the bustling city of Paris but also using plainsong, tolling bells and chromatic harmony to show that not all is as it seems on the surface. There are two bits of plainsong woven through the whole piece - a Kyrie Eleison chant, and the Dies Irae, which forms the bulk of the middle section of music. Part of what makes this piece so amazing is its orchestration and the way that is used to tell the story, and I've tried to capture as much of that as possible in the organ transcription - it makes it a challenging piece to play, but so worth it. I confess that I always end up singing along with the final passage: *"What makes a monster and what makes a man? Sing the bells, bells, bells, bells, bells of Notre Dame!"*

3 TIME

Here is a different kind of musical storytelling, with Hans Zimmer's 'Time' from the film 'Inception'. The music is heard at the very end of the film, when Leonardo DiCaprio's character wakes up on a plane, heads home and is finally reunited with his children. This piece has always had a life beyond the film for me; the repeated harmonic sequence, gradual building of texture and interweaving of melodic ideas is almost trance-like to listen to, and even more so to play - it's the piece which sends me into the most instant state of flow out of anything I play. But, for me, it also seems to tell the story of a person realising what is important to them; the simplicity of the opening material is almost forgotten by the loudest point of the piece, and yet that is where we return at the end: home.

4+5 FLIGHT

I have loved Jess Gillam's artistry for many years; she is so full of vibrancy, life and energy, constantly pushing the boundaries of what the saxophone can do. We have been friends for years and have spent most of that time saying *"we need to work together!!"*, so it was a really exciting moment to make this a reality in Rachel Portman's beautiful piece, 'Flight'. Rachel first wrote the piece for violin and piano for her album 'ask the river', and I'm very grateful to her for allowing us to create this version for saxophone and organ. We were imagining that the saxophone represented a bird soaring through and above the clouds, while the organ represents the clouds and the wind, gently carrying the bird on its journey. We first played this through together in the Royal Albert Hall in the middle of the night - Jess had just finished a show and I was just about to start practising! We wanted to capture some of that middle-of-the-night magic in the final recording; I love the way Jess's sound just floats around the space. While Jess was warming up to record, she improvised on the main theme. The producer and I looked at each other as we had both got instant goosebumps, so we recorded that too, and ended up loving it so much we decided it had to go on the album!

6 LIMINA LUMINIS

Olivia Belli wrote this piece for my first solo recital at the BBC Proms in 2023, and it instantly became a favourite of mine, featuring in almost every concert I have given since, as I feel such a strong emotional connection to it! Olivia describes how: *'"Limina Luminis' means 'Threshold of Light'; it is a metaphorical and spiritual journey towards light which for me represents the symbol of knowledge and understanding. It may compare to the 'Overview Effect': the cognitive change perceived by many astronauts when they look at the Earth from space for the first time. Psyche, emotionality and spirituality seem overwhelmed by the dramatic change of perspective that occurs during space travel in Earth's orbit or towards the Moon, when our world suddenly appears as a fragile sphere in the immensity of the Universe. A unique and rare place that is our home, the home of all humanity, without territorial borders and social, racial or religious divisions. The piece describes a space-time vortex, an ascent towards a light - the origin of knowledge - metaphorically represented by the high C that suddenly appears pianissimo at the top of a long dynamic crescendo."*

When I'm performing this piece I have in mind the emotional journey an astronaut makes when preparing for a flight to space; it feels as if we are inside their mind, feeling all their conflicting emotions as they prepare to make such an extraordinary journey. It begins with a mixture of excitement and nervousness rippling away, building as the flight gets closer and mixing with confidence and pride in the form of melodies that pass between the hands and the feet. There's a moment in the middle of the piece where the texture intensifies and the volume suddenly increases; this, in my mind, is the moment the rocket takes off, triggering a huge crescendo as our astronaut is completely surrounded by noise and power. And then, just when it feels as if it couldn't possibly get any louder, everything goes quiet and drops back to that single C, the acoustic slowly clearing to reveal a melody. This is the moment our astronaut has reached orbit, everything has gone quiet, and they have turned to see the earth from space for the first time.

7 FIREDOVE

I have wanted to commission a new work from Julie Cooper for several years and have also really wanted to work with the amazing violinist Elena Urioste, so I jumped at the opportunity to work with them both on this piece! In the early stages of forming the piece we talked about the brief suspended moment in time just after a firework has exploded, where time seems to slow down as little sparks of light surround us. This was the springboard for 'Firedove', which became a piece all about peace and light blocking out the dark. The day we recorded this, Elena, Julie and I were talking about how the world seems to be in such a dark place at the moment, with so many people scared for their future and how that will be impacted by wars, the climate and political changes. We talked about our own fears and decided to consciously channel them into the piece: a beacon of light in dark times. *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that"* - Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Creating a piece for the virtuosic talents and soundworld of Anna Lapwood and Elena Urioste is a composer's absolute dream! The monumentally powerful colours of the organ combined with the fragile ethereal beauty of violin with voices for me spoke 'Firedove'. Our strong desire to create a moment for reflection and calm in this current angry state of our world became the driving inspiration behind the piece. A dove rising out of the wars bringing hope and peace to humanity and our precious Earth. I am so grateful to Anna for creating such a unique and wonderful opportunity to write for her." Julie Cooper

8 COME TO ME

While working on this album I had just made the really difficult decision that it would be my last year working as Director of Music at Pembroke College, Cambridge, so I could pursue organ playing full time. Pembroke has played a huge part in my musical development over the last 9 years, and I adore working with the singers there. I knew that I really wanted to include the choir on this album as they represent such a huge part of who I am as a musician and what I want to say. One of our organ scholars recommended this piece, 'Come to Me' written by Ivo Antognini, a Swiss composer who specialises in choral music. The text of this piece is Christina Rossetti's 'Echo', written from the perspective of someone whose loved one has died. As they grieve, they feel it's only in their dreams that they find an echo of the happiness they felt with that person. I have never been able to conduct this without crying, and it's always

the same bit which gets me every time: *"O dream, how sweet, whose wakening should have been in Paradise, where souls brimful of love abide and meet"* - the harmony of this section is SO extraordinary, and getting to stand at its helm is completely emotionally overwhelming.

Come to me in the silence of the night;
Come in the speaking silence of a dream;
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright
As sunlight on a stream;
Come back in tears,
O memory, hope, love of finished years.

Oh dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,
Where souls brimful of love abide and meet;
Where thirsting longing eyes
Watch the slow door
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live
My very life again tho' cold in death:
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give
Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:
Speak low, lean low,
As long ago, my love, how long ago.

9 MAKE YOU FEEL MY LOVE

I wrote this arrangement for the Pembroke College Chapel Choir; we were in the middle of a tricky term with emotions running high, and I wanted to write something to give them hope and bring them some joy! The piece starts soft and meditative – almost like a psalm – and gradually expands out, increasing in intensity until the big surprise towards the end. I was very conscious of not wanting it to feel like a 'pop cover', but instead thinking if this piece had been written for a choir, what might that have looked like. Listening back to this, I find it so moving realising that the arrangement is written with the specific voices of this choir in mind - it's not just listening to a collection of voices, but listening to a group of friends.

10 ANGELS

People often ask me about my musical influences, and the answer is definitely eclectic! My parents brought me up on an interesting mix of classical music, Christian worship songs, and film scores. One piece I really associate with my childhood, though, is Robbie Williams 'Angels', which I remember my dad used to walk around singing all the time. I've loved it ever since, and it is actually Pembroke College's unofficial anthem (with, of course, the words changed to *"I'm loving Pembroke instead"*). I wrote this transcription sort of by accident - I was taking a break during a late-night rehearsal for my last album – 'Luna' - at the Royal Hospital School, and spent the time improvising on 'Angels'. I made a little recording of it and then sat down about a year later and actually worked it out properly. I see this kind of arrangement as such an interesting outpouring of the slight chaos of my brain and the way it brings together different worlds; when I was writing it I kept finding myself slipping a little bit of the Widor into the instrumental section in the middle! At first I tried to get rid of it, but by that point my brain had decided that's how it had to go, so there you have it - possibly the first time Widor and Robbie Williams have been heard in such close proximity... This piece is dedicated to my wonderful dad, who taught me so much about not seeing genre boundaries and just following the music that makes my heart sing.

11 NORTHERN LIGHTS

As soon as we decided to record this album in Nidaros Cathedral, I knew I wanted to include some music by Norwegian composer and pianist, Ola Gjeilo. I have played in Norway several times over the last few years, and every time I've found the landscape and people really inspiring. 'Northern Lights' was originally a choral piece, written in Oslo in 2007.

Ola said of 'Northern Lights': *"Originally a choral work, 'Northern Lights' is about the terrifying, powerful beauty conveyed in its sacred Latin text (Pulchra Es), although the music is more serene on the surface. While composing the piece in an attic above a starlit, wintery lake near Oslo, I was thinking about how this 'terrible' beauty is reflected in the northern lights, or aurora borealis; having grown up in the southern part of the country, I've only seen it once. Its electric vibrancy must have been both mesmerizing and terrifying to people in the past, when much superstition was inevitably attached to these experiences."*

I first experimented with transferring this piece to the organ for a concert I was giving in Kongsberg on the historic Gloger organ, built in 1765. It was a really interesting experience then bringing it across Norway to a much more contemporary instrument with so many colours to play with. Despite all the options at my fingertips, I actually found I wanted to retain some of the simplicity from the performance in Kongsberg, and just let the harmonies do the talking.

12 MURMURATIONS

As we look to the skies, we explore another amazing natural phenomenon: murmurations. Poppy Ackroyd's music so beautifully captures the way flocks of starlings shift and move as if they are one entity, and how a small number of birds can quickly grow into a huge flock. This piece showcases one of my favourite flutes on the organ, which my producer and I quickly identified as our favourite stop!

13 NAÏADES

I wasn't originally planning on recording 'Naïades', but I had been working on it for an upcoming performance and was playing it through for fun in one of the recording breaks. The producer asked what piece it was, and commented on how well it fit with the minimalism we had just been recording. We were running ahead in our sessions, so decided to try recording it and see how it felt. I adored playing this piece in the acoustic of Nidaros; it needs an acoustic which makes you feel as if the constant semiquavers are just floating all around you, and the Nidaros acoustic does just that! The piece is known to be one of the most technically demanding of Vierne's 'Pièces de fantaisie', with the constantly running triplets representing water nymphs swooping and soaring. This Moto Perpetuo figure is heard alongside a more melodic idea which seems to represent the water nymphs singing to passing sailors. I love the playful storytelling throughout this piece - in my mind, these are water nymphs with a rather lovely sense of humour.

14 GLASS

Rani's 'Glass' is another piece which I first performed in my concert in Kongsberg - the chef linked to the festival said Hania Rani was his favourite composer, and so I worked out how to play 'Glass' on the Gloger organ for him. I've come back to it several times since then, and find its gently shifting harmonies hypnotic - again, I feel like this track was really a duet between the organ and the Cathedral, as the harmonies shifted and merged in its warm acoustic.

15+16 PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE SUR LE NOM D'ALAIN

Duruflé's most popular work, this Prélude & Fugue was written following the death of fellow composer and organist Jehan Alain, who died in World War II at the age of 29. The whole piece is based on two main themes; the first motif, A-D-A-A-F, is based on the letters A.L.A.I.N, while the 2nd theme is taken from Alain's most famous organ piece, 'Litanies'. One of the reasons I adore playing this Prélude is because, to me, it contains so much of the storytelling and drama present in the film music that I have loved throughout my life. I often have a narrative running while I play the Prélude; the opening is a pack of wolves, hunting noiselessly through a wintry forest, moving as one. The innocence of the Litanies theme that follows is the voice of a child who is playing in the forest with no sense of the danger from the wolves. Throughout the Prélude, these two ideas are constantly passing backwards and forwards, getting closer and closer but never quite meeting. Then, at the end, we hear the Litanies theme in its entirety, accompanied by warm, gentle harmony in the left hand. An extension of the melody is passed between two different voices on the organ, and in my mind this is the moment that the child has said *"stop, it's too scary!"*, and the mother has said *"it's ok, I'm here, you're safe."*

The Fugue begins with a theme based again on the A.L.A.I.N motif - it's a difficult subject to characterise, but to me it feels like a musical representation of feeling shy in a crowded room and not knowing what to say. This subject tentatively tries to stretch its wings at the beginning but drops back down, giving way to a 2nd fugue subject full of semiquavers which is more extrovert in its character. A double fugue unfolds, with both subjects being developed alongside each other, helping each other grow. As the double fugue progresses the subjects increase in confidence, all leading up to the final 3 pages which is one of the most extraordinary crescendos written for the organ. The ending is an explosion of joy and confidence, almost unrecognisable when compared with the opening of the fugue. I hear this fugue as the story of someone growing up. All the way through my score I have the names of my girl choristers written above the music, with their names helping me inject their characters into the music at different moments. I'm always thinking of the way they start their journey in the choir as shy 11 year olds, and leave as confident 18 year olds ready to take on the world. I also see this fugue as representing something of my own journey as an organist which is why I wanted to close the album with it. I used to find playing so scary and uncomfortable, but now it just feels like an extension of who I am as a person, flowing through the instrument. When we came to recording this fugue, we did one take, listened back to it and said *"that's the one"*. We did several other takes just in case, but ended up always coming back to that first take, which ended up being the one we used in its entirety. If you had told me several years ago that I would be releasing a single take version of this fugue I would never have believed you, but here we are. This is a piece that has helped me spread my wings both as a player and as a person.

Creating an album like this requires the input of so many different people. To my amazing producer Jakob, thank you for encouraging me to 'play like me' and helping chase the goosebumps. To our engineer, Mike, thank you for working your magic to capture the phenomenal sound of the Nidaros organ. To Petra and the whole team at Nidaros, thank you for making us so welcome and letting us camp out in your beautiful Cathedral! To Alex and Sarah from Sony, thank you for trusting me when I presented you with a tracklist that might have seemed a little bizarre on paper; you've helped me create this sonic world that I'm so proud of. To my managers Claire & Meg, for their patience, guidance and friendship - I honestly feel like I have the best team in the world and I'm so grateful to be walking this path with you. To my therapist, Katie, who has helped me navigate some of the toughest decisions of my life: this album wouldn't exist without you. And lastly, to my family - Susie, Robin & Inigo - for being there every step of the way, sharing in my excitement, sorrows and joys, and helping make me proud of who I am today. – *Anna Lapwood*

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